

Environmental Restoration (ER) Project Cerro Grande Fire Accelerated Action Information Sheet

Potential Release Site (PRS) 18-003(d) Septic System and Drain Field

Technical Area (TA)-18 is located off Pajarito Road near the confluence of Pajarito Canyon and Threemile Canyon. The principal activities at TA-18 are the design, construction, research, development, and application of experiments that involve chain reactions of atoms splitting fast enough to be self-sustaining (called nuclear criticality).

PRS History: PRS 18-003(d) is an inactive septic tank that served the restroom in Building 18-116, Kiva III from 1960 to 1995. This cylindrical concrete tank holds approximately 500 gallons. The system includes the inlet line, septic tank, distribution box, and drain field. The drain field consists of four drain lines. In 1995, all floor drains were plugged and the sinks and toilets were removed. In 1996, the contents of the tank were removed, and the tank's interior was pressure washed as part of an interim cleanup action.

PRS 18-003(d) is listed on the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments module of the Laboratory's Hazardous Waste Facility permit. The ER Project has not proposed the site for no further action, and there are indications of residual risk at the site.

ER Project personnel sampled septic tank liquids and sludge, subsurface soils adjacent to the distribution box, surface and subsurface soils from the drain field, and alluvial groundwater from temporary wells during a field investigation in 1993 and 1994.

The New Mexico Environment Department initiated corrective action monitoring in 1996 because 1,2-dichlorethane was detected at concentrations greater than the standard from an unfiltered groundwater sample collected in the PRS 18-003(d) drain field. Five permanent alluvial monitoring wells were installed and sampled for radionuclides, volatile organic compounds, and metals for eight quarters.



Issues of Concern: The area upstream of PRS 18-003(d) burned during the Cerro Grande fire (a fire intensity rating of low to high). The drain field may be subject to erosion or scouring, and there may be surface and near-surface contamination associated with the drain field. The PRS is a potential obstruction to future flood-related activities in the area; however, there is no debris on the site that could enter the flood watercourse.

Accelerated Action Status: PRS 18-003(d) is part of a voluntary corrective measures plan designed to

- Collect supplemental surface and subsurface soil samples,
- Determine the nature and extent of soil contamination (if present) from the supplemental data,
- Assess the potential human health and ecological risks, and
- Clean up the site by excavation, if necessary.

Removing inactive septic tank systems that occupy canyon-bottom settings is an ER Project best management practice designed to mitigate environmental concerns. The voluntary corrective measures plan indicates that the tank at PRS 18-003(d) is scheduled for removal.

ER Project personnel have recommended PRS 18-003(d) for corrective action.

Related Documents: November 2, 1995; VCM Plan, March 17, 1999; LANL 1995, 52183; LANL 1997, 55120.2; LANL 1997, 57015; NMWQCC 1995, 54406

